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ABSTRACT

This article reviews certain generatively-based ideas on transactional behavior current in anthropology and discusses their relevance for sociolinguistics. The author finds that whereas sociolinguists tend to ignore such factors as social change and social mobility, anthropologists such as F. Barth ("Models of Social Behavior," 1966) express the concept of an ongoing process of change in social structure, stressing that social structure is subject to modification and that individual human values affect social institutions and are in turn affected by them. The author feels that this model of social structure, although not applied to language by Barth himself, is relevant to sociolinguistics because: (1) language expresses social values and hence any changes in the one must be reflected in the other; (2) language itself provides an interesting parallel to social structure in its own development and modification. The author feels that the linguist should be able to pin-point the development of a language as a result of individual choices, and that the sociolinguist should try to relate changes in social structure to changes in individual cultural values as espressed through speech in social interaction. Individual behavior is thus seen as the proper starting point for sociolinguistic investigation. Suggested applications of the model are presented. (FWB)

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SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

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The exact nature of the relationship between sociology and linguistics has been discussed by many writers in an attempt to define the field of sociolinguistics. On the one hand sociologists like Fishman have been concerned to verify their analyses of society by correlating linguistic data with social situations. On the other hand linguists have approached the problem from the opposite direction and have attempted to discover social correlates for their linguistic variables. In both cases the result has been interdisciplinary involvement and the tentative mapping out of a field now recognised as that of sociolinguistics. Anthropologists have also contributed to this general sociolinguistic field in describing correlations between cultural and linguistic form. Hymes (1967) made an important point in stressing the need for an analysis of speech functions within a community as opposed to an abstract description of the speech varieties to be found in a particular language: "The basis of description is a social, not a linguistic entity. We must begin from the social group and examine the codes within it." Sociolinguistics has evolved as a field from the fusion of diverse elements. It is still a relatively new discipline and one of the consequent advantages is a general readiness among sociologists to consider some of the new ideas and approaches which are being successfully developed in neighbouring disciplines. Currently one of the most persuasive influences is that of generative grammar. It has had an effect on developments in many fields: psychology, psycholinguistics, education, etc.. A less well-known fact is that a generative model of *behaviour* can be found causing controversy and consequent development in the field of anthropology, with particular reference to the notion of transactional behaviour. This interest in transactions, and the generative model postulated as underlying them by Barth (1966), may have important implications in sociolinguistics. I therefore propose to review these ideas found in current anthropological theory in order to reveal their relevance to sociolinguistics.

There has been a tendency among sociologists to regard social structure as, in some sense, "given"; an unchanging predetermined and predetermining condition of social interaction. Fishman, in his attempts to correlate linguistic and situationable variables, considers the social structure to be fully and finally definable in terms of his concept of domains. "The domain is a higher order abstraction arrived at from a consideration of the socio-cultural patterning which surrounds language choice" (Fishman 1965). Bernstein is another sociologist who considers social structure as ultimately determining linguistic factors. "Different forms of social relationship may generate quite different speech systems or linguistic codes by affecting the planning procedures" (Bernstein 1966). His general hypothesis is that language arises out of the cultural constraints of role and control. This leads to the postulation of two codes. A restricted code results from an environment where social values are stressed and where there is little evidence of role discretion. Language is a means of asserting shared social values rather than a means of individual expression. An elaborated code, on the other hand, is characterized by high reflexiveness and a greater range of linguistic choice. It is a means of individual expression and a feature of the speech in middle classes. Bernstein claims that these linguistic codes are realizations of social structure, which therefore shapes the expression of social roles and the processes by which they are learned. Codes regulate the cultural meanings individuated through language.

Both Bernstein and Fishman may be said to ignore an important aspect of the social structure of society. This is the fact of change in society and the existence of social mobility especially evident in Western society. For example one aspect of language choice obviously involves role-relations: a son

speaking to his father will select particular linguistic forms which will differ from those he would use in addressing a close friend. However there is a modern tendency for parents to encourage children to address them by their Christian names. Inevitably as the children grow up the nature of the relationship will develop differently from that of more conservative parent-children relationships. Language is here reflecting a change in attitude and may perhaps turn out to be the prelude of a change of social structure. Another similar case is the collapse of the old structural classes in the University environment obviously due to increased interaction between different classes. Perhaps new divisions will arise peculiar to that particular situation; what is important is that these changing social processes are mediated via and expressed in speech.

Barth (1966) expresses the concept of an ongoing process of change in the social structure, though he does not apply it in any way to language. His main thesis is that social structure is subject to modification, and that individual human values affect social institutions and are in turn affected by social institutions: "Patterns are generated through processes of interaction and in their forms reflect the constraints and incentives under which people act." So these social patterns are seen as the cumulative result of a number of separate choices and decisions made by individuals interacting with each other. Most inter-personal relations can therefore be viewed as transactional in nature. Each move changes the strategic situation and "canalizes subsequent choices." From one point of view the choice in any situation is indeed restricted by social and institutional norms. As Firth says: "The moment a conversation is started whatever is said is a determining condition for what in any reasonable expectation may follow" (Firth 1937). This view sees social forms as the result of a large number of transactions taking place between actors who are all subject to the constraints and incentives inherent in their social positions. But, on the other hand, implicit in such a view of the restrictive nature of social norms is the recognition of the possibility of the individual's refusing to conform, of his exercising his right to choose alternative forms. This moves the stress from "canalizes" to "choices" and allows for the possibility and the effects of individual innovation. Barth considers that such innovatory choices at the level of the individual can have large-scale effects on social structure itself. So the institutional and the individual aspects of social structure are seen as mutually effective. This model of social structure can be applied to language in two ways: (a) language expresses social values and hence any changes in the one must be reflected in the other; (b) language itself provides an interesting parallel to social structure in its own development and modification. It is interesting to consider what light a transactional model of social interaction throws on a variety of contrasting language situations, from the level of the multilingual community to the study of interpersonal relations between two monolingual individuals.

It is possible to consider the influence of a multitude of individual linguistic choices on the development of the language as a whole. Labov's investigations in New York City led him to regard a speech community as a group who hold a common evaluative norm with respect to speech, even though it may not be put into practice by any but a small section of the community. Barth's comment on transactional methods is relevant here: "Through offering, bargaining over and consummating a transaction A & B and their audience are in a position to compare their respective judgments of value." It is currently a very fashionable pursuit to discuss language and speech with particular attention to pronunciation and grammar. In New York Labov tells us the pronunciation of the upper middle classes is considered the norm; dialects such as those of the Negroes or the working class are considered substandard both by the upper middle class apeaker *and the speakers of these dialects themselves.* This is a consequence of the superior position of the upper middle classes in the social structure. But an important phase of re-education has recently begun in many parts of America. Educationalists are attempting to inculcate new attitudes to language and by overt discussion to show that particular speech varieties are most suitable and most effective (and therefore most "valuable") in particular situations. If such attempts are successful attitudes to dialect speech may change and there will inevitably be

repercussions both on individual values and the general attitude towards the social function of speech. "One small change in the variable can generate in time a totally different model" (Barth 1966).

To describe the linguistic markers of a particular speech situation the linguist generally begins by delineating the social and individual variables: role, situation, topic, class, sex, age, etc. He must face the difficulty of deciding to what extent language is determined by the social context and what linguistic choices are due to personal idiosyncratic features. In order to control these variables to a certain extent it is helpful to take initially the case of a multilingual society where linguistic choice can be clearly identified in terms of different languages. Joan Rubin has examined the speech situation in Paraguay and has outlined a model to explain the criteria for choosing Spanish or Guarani in any situation. She has "tried to narrow the gap between empirical observation and formal model-building" (Rubin 1968a). She found that although the extremes of the social class structure are well-marked there is a continual gradation between these extremes. The series of language-choices did not always reflect exactly the changing social situation, so social structure cannot be simply equated with linguistic structure as realised in alternative speech varieties at any point. Rather there is a large area of indeterminancy which may be resolved for linguistic usage by a system of ordered priorities. In an informal situation, particularly, the choice of Spanish or Guarani is decided by personal factors. Hence individual choices will ultimately determine the development of Spanish and Guarani in *this*, the informal, area at least.

An interesting case to compare here is Geertz's account of linguistic etiquette with respect to Javanese. In using Javanese it is almost impossible to say anything without indicating the social relationship between the speaker and the listener in terms of status and familiarity. Geertz uses an economic metaphor to express the way Javanese social structure is reflected in linguistic choices: "Etiquette patterns tend to be regarded as a kind of emotional capital which may be invested in putting others at ease" (Geertz 1960). The idea of reciprocity found in most transactions is controlled here by social structure. Homans writes: "Social behaviour is an exchange of goods, material goods, but also non-material ones such as the symbols of approval or prestige. Persons that give much to others try to get much from them" (Homans 1967). This is not easy in Javanese. The superior in any social interaction *must* be linguistically acknowledged by the use of a certain level of Javanese. The inferior builds a wall for him around his emotional life without any demand or expectation of reciprocation. Of special interest are changes in this society since Bahasa Indonesian was adopted as the national language of Indonesia. This has provided an alternative means of communication not only for those who speak different languages (i.e. as a lingua franca) but also for those who share a common language. In modern society the tendency is to minimize class differences, but if we were forced to indicate relative social status every time one addressed another person, this would obviously be impossible. The adoption of Indonesian as a lingua franca and national language has therefore been an important *means* of abolishing class barriers. Tanner remarks: "Bahasa Indonesian in modern Indonesia's complex society functions as a sort of linguistic highest common denominator" (Tanner 1967). Formerly it was often difficult to decide what level of Javanese was due to a person. The use of Indonesian neutralizes all the variables – situation, topic, status, age, sex, friendship and so on, and provides a non-committal mode of communication. As Tanner explains, "code selection" is a dynamic process, which often involves the preliminary use of a neutral code while information necessary to code choice is gathered, an informal 'testing' of a code that an actor hypothesizes is probably appropriate by inserting words or phrases of the proposed code into the conversation and noting the other actor's response before risking a complete shift of code."

This description brings to mind Barth's explanation of the function of an entrepreneur in transactional activities. An entrepreneur brings about value consistency between different spheres. He can assess two apparently incompatible spheres and equate the values of each. In one sense a standard language or a lingua franca functions as an entrepreneur. The differences in culture and attitudes of different peoples

can to a large extent be neutralized in a standard language. In any particular situation the linguistic choices forced on one by one's language may cause one to indicate status or solidarity. By using a lingua franca this problem may be avoided. A standard language can also be useful in providing a means of communication between speakers of different dialects (a less extreme case of 'lingua franca' function) where dialects are mutually unintelligible.

A bilingual individual is a good example of an entrepreneur especially if he is a fluent compound bilingual and is therefore used to comparing both his languages. He could be viewed as in some sense a cultural entrepreneur since he can assess both cultures and equate them in terms of value at particular points. He alone can judge whether a certain expression has a true equivalent in the other language. He alone can assess the purposes for which each language is best suited, which areas are best developed in a particular language, where the vocabulary of one is more precise than the other for example. In actual fact it is very rare to find a person who is bilingual in this way. Bilinguals tend to associate each of their languages with particular domains and situations, and consequently have difficulty in making the necessary abstractions involved in assessing the respective 'values' expressed in each language.

We do find this transactional process however in speech communities where code-switching is a large scale phenomenon. From this point of view simply of linguistic change code-switching can have important effects on linguistic "values" or features. Barth suggests that the changes brought about by the transactional process affect both social structure and individual values. In the code-switching situation individual choices and institutionally-determined choices interact, hence lead to constant development in both or all the languages concerned. Gumperz makes this clear when he says: "Code-switching in everyday interaction even between culturally distant sub-groups sets up cross-currents of diffusion which materially change the structure of local speech varieties" (Gumperz 1967a). He gives as an example two genetically unrelated languages along the Maharasta-Mysore boundary in central India, Kannada and Marathi. Surface features differ but sentences in each language have almost identical constituent structure. So bilinguals in these languages need only internalize two sets of terms for the same objects and grammatical relationships. If we compare this situation with the situation in many monolingual societies the importance of interaction in the development of common linguistic features is quite obvious. The amount of interaction between the lower working class child in New York and the upper middle class professional man is predictably very low. Hence we can explain the lack of "value correlation" in their phonological systems, their lexical and syntactic systems and their semantic and situational handling of language: they speak very different dialects and control different ranges of speech varieties. Differences maintain themselves over long periods because the system of roles and statuses favours the retention of overt linguistic features of distinctness. Language distance is clearly a function of social interaction.

But it is also important to notice other aspects of influence of social structure on language. As Lyons points out: "The language of a particular society is an integral part of its culture and the lexical distinctions drawn by each language will tend to reflect the culturally-important features of objects, institutions and activities in the society in which the language operates" (Lyons 1968). This could be regarded as an interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity. It is a valid expression of the way cultural values are expressed through, hence are modifiable by language. This is clearly seen in the development of pidgin languages, where languages which are structurally dissimilar may fuse into a pidgin solely through the exigencies of necessary communication. Economic and linguistic transactions are usually equally involved in the formation of such languages. Just as early traders bargained over goods in order to work out a system of values, so through speech they formed a language capable of expressing those values.

Gumperz elsewhere considers the social factors involved in code-switching. Initially he states the

problem of measuring code-switching: "One of the effects of the rapid social change in modern urban societies and in the so-called developing societies is that individuals may share a number of social relationships and are free to allude to them by language shift. Free conversation collected in such settings thus frequently shows what on the surface looks like almost random variation between languages and varieties" (Gumperz 1967b). Gumperz' suggestions as to the reasons for choosing particular languages or particular varieties are very relevant to the relationship between language and social structure. He points out that it is the individual's perception of social factors which affects language choice. The sociologist may categorise these factors and place them in an order of priority but he is simply making explicit the results of an enormous number of individual choices. In describing the social factors which guide language choice it is essential therefore to get down to empirical facts, as Rubin does. Abstract classification of all the possible variables is of no more help than the IPA chart in describing the system of any particular language. Certain combinations of social factors operate to decide linguistic choices in a particular situation, in a particular language: "The speaker's categories are the result of a process of transformation in which a variety of stimuli are interpreted in terms of the environment, i.e. the speech event, in which they occur" (Gumperz 1967b).

Considering the speech situation in more detail Goffman (1964) remarks that it involves "a little system of mutually ratified and ritually governed face-to-face action." He stresses the importance of "impression-management" in any situation and this is mentioned also by Barth. It is often a matter of "skewed communication". Agreement must be reached in any situation on the relevant statuses of the participants; consequently each tends to over-communicate the status he feels is appropriate to his particular role. This leads in time to stereotyped forms of behaviour for particular situations. This seems a little theoretical and abstract as it stands, so it might be helpful to take an example. In Western society we have various methods of indicating status and solidarity through language. One method is the use of the first name of a person to indicate equality and friendship while the use of the title Mr/Mrs/Miss plus surname indicates social distance in terms of status and/or solidarity. Consequently if an inferior commits a misdemeanour a social superior can stress their social distance by using "Mr Brown" instead of "John" as he would normally address him; thus for a particular purpose, the relative status of the two may be over-communicated by the superior. An interesting point is that the stage where no name is used is unmarked as far as status and solidarity are concerned, and is widely used in situations where the correct form of address is a matter of doubt. This is a kind of entrepreneur function analogous to the use of Bahasa Indonesian in Indonesia.

Goffman outlines some of the complex rules for social interaction in our society: "Once a state of talk has been ratified, cues must be available for requesting the floor and giving it up, for informing the speaker as to the stability of the focus of attention he is receiving. Intimate collaboration must be sustained to ensure that one turn at talking neither overlaps the previous one too much, nor wants for inoffensive conversational supply, for someone's turn must always and exclusively be in progress" (Goffman 1964). It is noteworthy that the degree of formality in any situation will often tend to determine which linguistic form is most suitable for any particular function; thus, requesting the floor at a public meeting involves complex formal rules and both gestures and speech are necessary. In informal contexts it is interesting to note individual methods of "taking the floor". From taped conversations I have noted the following methods: an increase in verbal feedback; the "yes, yes," "I see," sequences speed up when a person wishes to speak himself; or a person may begin to speak hesitantly as soon as the other person pauses, then wait, and as the other person realises his intention he is free to begin again. This method of signalling a desire to speak is especially noticeable among young people and may be evidence of linguistic change.

One of the most interesting applications of the generative model is in the discussion of "gossip" by

anthropologists. Gossip serves many functions, as Paine (1967) points out, and it is the cumulative effect of many individual choices which is important in this area. The only universal factor is human self-interest and that is only "given" in its ubiquity. It can vary in the distribution of its intensity, in its content and form, and in its modes of mobilization and employment. So there is a wide area where individual choice must be exercised. Paine strongly opposes any treatment of gossip solely as a function of social structure. It can be used for many purposes besides the obvious one of increasing solidarity among those gossiping. It can be used to exclude certain sections of society; it can be used to delineate cliques; in the society of Makah Indians it is used to control disputes; in some societies it can be used to express displeasure with someone in a socially acceptable way, without involving any physical backlash; in our own society it is often used for the purposes of passing information and protecting the interests of the individual. Naturally such an important social phenomenon involves a variety of linguistic choices. In an informal situation such as a chat with a social equal who is a close friend one's sole purpose may be to increase solidarity. In this case the topic tends to wander and association of ideas seems the only connecting link. If on the other hand the situation is one where the information is being passed or is desired certain linguistic features will structure the development of the conversation more strictly. Confidence can be marked by such structures as "between ourselves" or "don't tell anyone but – " etc.

Another function of gossip in informal situations is the desire to elicit confirmation of personal judgment or to convey one's sense of self-righteousness. Such intentions can be deduced from the use of expressions such as "Well there was nothing else I could say, was there?" The tag question frequently occurs in this situation and the hearer is forced to answer as the speaker desires, if he is to retain the speaker's confidence and friendship. We must bear in mind Paine's point that each individual has his own motives in gossiping, though he must express these through a language shared by his community. It is therefore important to note how the individual manipulates his language for his particular purpose, and which linguistic features convey his individual intentions: phonology (intonation, for example), choice of particular grammatical structures or lexical items, use of non-standard forms, etc. may all be used to convey individual motives. When a large number of individuals choose to express a particular speech function by a particular linguistic marker we have moved to the consideration of the linguistic features of a socially recognized speech function, as for example, commands, requests, greetings, etc.

The problem of deciding to what degree the linguistic choices of the individual speaker are influenced by the language of the community as a whole is very complex. What we consider an idiosyncratic choice may in fact be negatively influenced by social factors. To some extent any individual is a product of his age and environment. The fact that social structure does evolve from the results of many individual choices suggests that the individuals were subject to similar influences. With language the problem resolves itself into choice from an objectively describable system. The linguist should therefore be able to pin-point the development of a language as a result of individual choices; and the means by which an individual expresses his individuality through a particular combination of features from the system. The sociolinguist should try to relate changes in social structure to changes in individual cultural values as expressed through speech in social interaction. Both can begin by following Paine's advice to "study the individual's behaviour".

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